16 PERSONALITY FACTORS
An Introduction

The 16 Personality Factors questionnaire is a psychometric assessment that enables you to better understand your personality.

Originally published in 1949, the 16PF has been developed over 50 years and is the most researched personality questionnaire in the world. Its power to reliably predict people's behaviour has been much supported. This, together with the rich and diverse analyses that it offers, has won the 16PF an excellent international reputation as effective tool for selection, development, career and life counselling purposes.

Key Principles

Some principles in keeping with the 16PF model and self-development include:

- There are no 'right and wrong' personalities – all personalities have potential strengths and potential development areas. The appropriateness of our preferred style of behaving depends on the context.
- Personality questionnaires help us to better understand our uniqueness and individuality.
- Development is as much about honouring our unique strengths as it is about working on our development areas.
- Working on our development areas does not mean fundamentally changing our personalities – it often means understanding our potential impact in different contexts and making manageable adjustments and refinements.
- The psychologist's objective is not to judge your personality – it is to help you to understand one model of personality and to draw from it in ways that fulfil your needs and agenda.
- You have the right to confidentiality – questionnaire scores are stored by your Occupational Psychologist, Alex Volcansek, and written reports are stored by CPAS. Your 16PF information will not be used in any way unless you give consent. One-to-one sessions are strictly confidential.

Understanding Personality

Different models and theorists view personality in different ways. Personality has been defined as:

> 'More or less stable factors that make one person's behaviour consistent from one time to another, and different from the behaviour other people would manifest on comparable situations.'
>
> Child 1968

> 'The unique organisation of characteristics that define an individual and determine that person's pattern of interaction with the environment.'
>
> Allport 1961

Raymond Cattell, author of the 16PF, held the view that personality encompasses a broad range of phenomena. His definition includes the roles we typically play, states we regularly experience, our motivations, and the styles of thinking and behaving that we consistently draw upon when navigating different areas of our lives.

Personality is usually considered to be distinct from skill. It is more about our preferences, than about our skills. It is less about what we are able to do and more about how we tend or prefer to do things. This distinction will be upheld on the Arrow programme.

The assumption that our personalities reflect a consistent and predictable part of us is important to highlight. This quality enables ourselves and others to recognise our individuality and to value and rely upon our uniqueness. Essentially it enables us to predict how we will probably behave in different situations.

The Structure of the 16PF

Cattell thought that we have traits within us which lead us to respond in similar ways towards different people, tasks or situations. The questionnaire that you filled in attempts to reflect the 16 personality factors or traits that are thought to underlie the full range of healthy personalities. (These will be described on the programme). They are thought to shape our typical styles of behaving, for example how we typically relate to others and our preferred thinking style.

A good analogy comes from chemistry. Just as scientists view the physical world as being made up of a set of stable elements from the periodic table (carbon, oxygen, etc.), so Cattell viewed personality as being made up of a set of stable elements called personality traits. Each of us are thought to possess these traits to varying degrees. Each of us have more or less of certain traits in comparison to other people. More does not mean better and less does not mean worse. The variations create the pattern and colour of our unique personalities. Just as in

chemistry, it is assumed that the 16 traits combine and relate together in dynamic ways to help to produce our richly diverse world. Hence our unique personalities are thought to reflect a unique combination and interaction of these 16 traits.

How is Personality Formed? Can we Change our Personalities? How does it Develop?

The straightforward answer is 'it depends on which psychologist you ask and which school of thought they come from.' There is evidence to support the view that personality is formed both by genetic factors that we inherit and by environmental factors. Environmental factors include how people behaved towards us during our formative years and the impact of wider cultural norms, social values and economic factors.

The extent to which personality is stable or can change is hotly debated. Some say personality is largely innate and stable (e.g. Cattell's Trait Approach). For example a 60 year mother on returning from her first school reunion exclaimed 'they had not changed a bit'. We would not recognise each other and ourselves if this were not the case at least to some extent.

Equally development programmes would not exist if we did not have substantial belief and evidence that people change and have agency to do so. Cognitive/Behavioural approaches (e.g. competency frameworks) suggest we can learn new cognitions and behaviours and add them to our repertoire. Coaching and counselling suggests we can challenge and change our beliefs and attitudes and that such changes can lead to new behaviours. For example, Bandura claims that, if through positive social learning experiences (such as Arrow), people's self belief to execute certain behaviours (e.g. leadership behaviours) is increased, then (leadership) behaviour will change. The question is then to what extent these changes permeate our personality, to the extent that our preferred and typical way of behaving changes.

There is little within the model of the 16PF to inform us about how personality develops over time. Other personality models do inform us. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator suggests that our personalities mature throughout a large part of our life span, as we learn to access those parts of our personality that we have given less attention to. It is as if we put certain aspects of our personality aside for safe keeping until we are ready to explore and use them fully. Maturity is also thought to be about integrating different and conflicting parts of our personality as we grow older.

16PF Personality Profiling – a Two-Way Process

You have completed the 16PF questionnaire and you will receive a short written report describing a personality profile that is typical of people who have responded in a similar way to you. This report is for your purposes only. During your one-to-one session Alex Volcansek, Occupational Psychologist, will facilitate you to:

- Interpret your own views of your personality.
- Draw on your current self-understanding and life experiences.
- Integrate your views and current self-understanding with insights and data from the 16PF.

Hence personality profiling is very much a two-way process.

As a self-report questionnaire, the 16PF relies on your views of your personality within the structure provided. Essentially the questionnaire can only reflect back what you tell it. Also, as with all measures, a degree of error is to be expected. Additionally, as you integrate your current self-understanding with the 16PF during your one-to-one session, refinements and subtleties will be elicited. For all these reasons you may consider that some descriptions within the written report are not representative of you and then changes (within limits) are quite acceptable and indeed are encouraged. It is up to you to note these changes.

Objectives

The overall aim is to help you to:

1. Improve your understanding of your unique personality.
2. Own and honour your unique personality.
3. Make new development decisions that move you towards your objectives.

Please consider the following questions as you explore the 16PF:

- What do I most want to get out of the 16PF one to one session?
- What is meaningful, useful and real to me here, given my search for self-understanding?
- How can I meet my objectives by honouring my unique personality strengths?
- How can I meet my objectives by flexing my personality style?